

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR GR US

SUBJ: EFFECT ON SOUDA AB NEGOTIATIONS OF AIRCRAFT

SALES AND REPORTED VIEWS OF IOANNIDES

REF A. ATHENS 3705 B. ATHENS 3724 C. STATE 128841

SUMMARY: NEGOTIATIONS ON SOUDA AB SEEM TO BE IN STATE OF FLUX, WITH IMPACT OF RECENT AIRCRAFT SALES NOT YET FELT, FONOFF PRINCIPAL NEGOTIATOR OUT OF COUNTRY, AND IOANNIDES VIEWS AWAITING CONFIRMATION BY EVENTS. REGARDLESS OF ASSESSMENT USG MIGHT MAKE OF FURTHER HOMEPORTING ACTIONS, WE SUGGEST COURSE OF ACTION TO TEST INTENT OF GOG AND TO ALLOW CONSTRUCTION AT SOUDA AB TO PROCEED. END SUMMARY.

1. AS NOTED PARA 2, REF A, WE HAVE RECEIVED INDICATION OF VIEWS REPORTEDLY HELD BY BG IOANNIDES TO EFFECT THAT STATUS QUO ANTE ON SOUDA AB MIGHT BE MORE DESIRABLE TO HIM THAN WOULD ANY LIKELY OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS. IT APPEARS FROM THIS THAT OUR FIRM STAND ON INVOLABILITY OF NATO SOFA, AND MUTABILITY OF BILATERAL SECURITY AGREEMENTS ONLY IN CONTEXT OF TOTAL U.S. PRESENCE, HAS PERSUADED GREEKS THAT THEY ARE NOT ABLE IN CONTEXT OF SOUDA AB AGREE-
MENT TO ATTAIN THEIR OBJECTIVE OF ESTABLISHING CLOSE CONTROLS OVER U.S. ACTIVITIES AND SHIFTING TOTAL FINANCIAL BURDEN TO U.S. SHOULDERS. BUT WE CANNOT YET ACCEPT REPORTED EXPRESSION OF IOANNIDES' VIEWS AS DEFINITIVE STATEMENT OF GOG POLICY, AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO BE READY TO NEGOTIATE

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FURTHER ON SOUDA AB AGREEMENT (ON OPERATIONAL PROVISIONS OF WHICH MILITARY-TO-MILITARY CONTACTS CONTINUE) UNTIL AND UNLESS WE RECEIVE VERY CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT THIS REPRESENTS GOG POLICY.

2. ABSENCE OF AMBASSADOR GREGORIADES, PRINCIPAL FONOFF NEGOTIATOR, WHO ATTENDING SERIES OF NATO MEETINGS, AND PAUSE IN SOUDA AB NEGOTIATIONS WHILE AIRCRAFT SALES ARRANGEMENTS CONCLUDED SEEM TO HAVE CREATED NEGOTIATING HIATUS IN WHICH WE NOW FIND OURSELVES. WE HAVE PERCEIVED SOME SIGNS THAT HAFB AND FONOFF ONCE AGAIN ARE STIRRING ON SOUDA AB ISSUE, BUT WOULD NOT ANTICIPATE GREEK INITIATIVE, IF ANY, TO SCHEDULE NEXT NEGOTIATING SESSION UNTIL GREGORIADES RETURNS FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING (AND PERHAPS SUMMIT NATO COUNCIL MEETING OF JUNE 26, AS WELL).

3. WE WOULD REGARD CONTINUATION OF CURRENT NEGOTIATING HIATUS BEYOND GREGORIADES' RETURN AS CORROBORATION OF REPORTED IOANNIDES' VIEW AS GOG POSITION. IN THIS CASE, U.S. NAVY (AND USG) WOULD BE FACED WITH SEVERAL QUESTIONS IN CONTEMPLATING FUTURE USE OF SOUDA AB, AMONG WHICH ARE: (A) WHETHER U.S. NAVY WOULD WISH TO COMMIT CONSTRUCTION FUNDS (NOW TEMPORARILY HELD UP) WITHOUT GREATER SECURITY OF TENURE AT CURRENT USAGE RATE THAN WOULD BE PROVIDED BY A 1959 AGREEMENT, LIMITATIONS OF WHICH ALREADY ONCE USED AS THREAT BY HAFB, (B) WHETHER CONTINUATION OF CURRENT PATTERN OF USAGE UNDER OBSOLESCEMENT AGREEMENT WOULD BE SUFFICIENT ASSURANCE OF TENURE AT SOUDA AB ON WHICH TO BASE HOMEPORTING OF AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER; (C) EVEN IF BOTH OF FOREGOING WERE ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY, WHETHER GOG WOULD BE WILLING TO PERMIT USN USE OF ELEFSIS AB, AS PART OF HOMEPORTING ARRANGEMENT, WITHOUT ATTEMPTING TO EXTRACT CONDITIONS AS UNPALATABLE AS THOSE WE HAVE REJECTED IN SOUDA AB NEGOTIATION.

4. WE UNDERSTAND THAT, WHATEVER FINAL OUTCOME OF USG REVIEW OF PHASE II OF HOMEPORTING, U.S. NAVY REGARDS USE OF SOUDA AB AS QUITE IMPORTANT. CURRENTLY PLANNED CONSTRUCTION APPARENTLY IS RELEVANT TO SUCH USE. IN EVENT IOANNIDES' VIEWS CONFIRMED, AND ALL THREE QUESTIONS IN SECRET

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PARA 3 ABOVE ANSWERED IN NEGATIVE, WE MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO SECURE ASSURANCE OF TENURE AT SOUDA AB ADEQUATE FOR CONSTRUCTION (IF PERHAPS NOT FOR HOMEPORTING OF CARRIER).

5. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCE, DEPARTMENT MIGHT WISH TO AUTHORIZE EMBASSY TO SEND LETTER TO FONOFF INDICATING U.S. NAVY INTENTION TO PROCEED WITH PREVIOUSLY PLANNED CONSTRUCTION

AT SOUDA AB ON ASSUMPTION THAT GOG ACQUIESCED IN PATTERN OF USAGE CHARACTERISTIC OF U.S. NAVY OPERATIONS AT SOUDA AB IN RECENT YEARS AND THAT GOG DID NOT HAVE PLANS TO SEEK ALTERATION OF THIS USAGE RATE. GOG WOULD HAVE OPTIONS OF: (A) ALLOWING OUR ASSUMPTION TO STAND, WITHOUT RESPONDING; (B) RESPONDING IN AFFIRMATIVE, OR (C) RESPONDING NEGATIVELY. IN FIRST TWO CASES WE CAN PROCEED WITH CONSTRUCTION, WHILE IN THIRD CASE WE WOULD BE NO WORSE OFF THAN AT PRESENT. CURRENT UNCERTAINTIES ON CONSTRUCTION NEED TO BE OVERCOME.

6. WE TRUST THAT FOREGOING HELPS TO ANSWER QUESTION POSED IN REF C. TASCA

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